

# iConference Impressions

We hosted a four-hour Federal Impact Aid workshop on December 15<sup>th</sup>, originating from the Superintendent's Conference Room with teleconferencing to 20 remote locations around Montana (some Metnet sites and some VisionNet sites). In past years, the annual workshop was held at a single Montana location with around 20 attendees traveling to the single location. With the ability to teleconference to numerous sites across the state, the workshop attendance tripled to over 60 people!

The teleconference was co-presented by an OPI School Finance staff and a representative of the U.S. Dept. of Education. The Dept. of Ed staffer used a PowerPoint program to present material. An additional OPI School Finance staff-member "commanded" the video remote control to effectively alternate the video screen between PowerPoint slides and the Dept. of Ed. speaker. This intermittent switching between slide and speaker helped avoid the lulling effect that can occur when only slides are shown on the screen.

We had 3 positive comments regarding the workshop delivery at the conclusion of the workshop and several emails stating the convenience of access to important training without having to travel for hours. Although this was the first time the School Finance group used the video conferencing equipment, the workshop was an overwhelming success.

Based on our successful experience, following is a list of suggestions that could help make your teleconference a success too:

1. Target your Montana teleconference locations early and make arrangements to secure those sites. The contact person for arranging sites is Penne Beto, 444-0707.
2. Notify your target audience well in advance of the workshop date so that potential attendees can reserve time on their calendar.
3. Post your conference on the conference calendar on the OPI website.
4. Send e-mail notices and reminders several times prior to the workshop, and post in the monthly MASS summary and division newsletters.
5. Invest sufficient time practicing use of the remote control to switch between the presenter and the computer. NOTE: if the main OPI presenter will be heavily involved in the workshop, it is suggested that an additional staff-member be used to command the remote control device.
6. Use camera pre-sets for moving between different presenters in the same room.
7. If a PowerPoint presentation will be used, be sure the slides are in teleconference-friendly format (Arial font and black type works well – the time we spent converting the Dept. of Ed's slides from Times Roman to Arial was well worth it!).
8. E-mail (to target directory) or send web-link of workshop handouts in advance of the teleconference date.
9. At the beginning of the workshop, we asked all sites to mute their microphones to keep the noise level down. All locations were informed that questions could be asked at any point during the workshop, simply by un-muting their microphone, asking their question, and re-muting after the question was fully asked and answered.
10. Inform all sites that any audio/video difficulties should be immediately called in to 406-444-9588.
11. Perform a location-by-location roll call check-in at the beginning of the conference to make sure all sites are up and running and that audio/video checks out okay.



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